

## Message Text

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TO USNMR SHAPE

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EXDIS, MILITARY ADDRESSEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MCAF, NATO, FR, OVIP (SCHLESINGER, JAMES)

SUBJECT: U.S. BRIEFING ON RESERACH AND DEVELOPMENT RELATED TO  
TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS

REF: THE HAGUE 4890

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESENTATION TO HIGH-LEVEL GOF LEADERS OF  
PROPOSED U.S. NPG BRIEFINGS ON TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS R&D  
COULD HELP MOVE GOF TOWARD OUR VIEW OF TAC NUKE PROBLEM. IT  
COULD ALSO ENRICH SUBSTANCE OF US-GOF EXCHANGES ON MILITARY  
MATTERS. WERECOMMEND THAT SECRETARY SCHLESINGER INCLUDE BRIEFING  
IN HIS VISIT TO FRANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. WE NOTE FROM AGREED MINUTE OF NOVEMBER NPG MINISTERIAL  
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MEETING (PARA 6, REFTTEL) THAT U.S. HAS OFFERED TO PROVIDE A  
BRIEFING AT THE NEXT NPG MINISTERIAL MEETING ON U.S. RESEARCH AND  
DEVELOPMENT WITH RESPECT TO TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS. FRANCE,  
OF COURSE, IS NOT MEMBER OF NPG AND THEREFORE WILL NOT BE

PRESENT TO HEAR U.S. BRIEFING. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT IDEA OF EXPOSING FRENCH TO SUCH BRIEFING:

A. TECHNICAL -FRANCE, AS WELL AS OTHER NATO ALLIES, TENDS TO VIEW TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS PRIMARILY AS DETERRENT FORCE. TO FRENCH, ACTUAL MILITARY CAPABILITY OF TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE AT BEST. AS A RESULT, FRENCH TAC NUKE TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES HAVE NOT YET BEEN AS FINELY TUNED AS THOSE OF US/NATO. MOREOVER, SOME FRENCH FEAR THAT DETERRENT EFFECT OF TAC NUKES IS WEAKENED TO THE EXTENT THEY PROVIDE A DISTINCT WAR FIGHTING CAPABILITY. FRENCH CONTINUE TO SUSPECT THAT, ONCE STARTED, PROLONGED CONFLICT IN CENTRALEUROPE WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO LARGE SCALE USE OF TODAY'S GENERATION OF TAC NUKES, WITH OUTCOME THAT CENTRAL EUROPE AND PERHAPS FRANCE WOULD BE DESTROYED. SHOULD U.S. BRIEFING DEMONSTRATE THAT TECHNOLOGY FOR LOW YIELD, ACCURATELY TARGETTABLE, LIMITED FALLOUT AND DEPENDABLE TAC NUKE WEAPONS IS FEASIBLE, SOME OF THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT TECHNICAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS COLLATERAL DAMAGE MIGHT BE RELIEVED, ALTHOUGH FRENCH WOULD CONTINUE TO QUESTION WHETHER IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY CAN (OR SHOULD) MEET PROBLEMS OF VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL NUCLEARESCALATION. IF FRENCH CAN BE SHOWN TECHNICAL POSSIBILITIES OF IMPROVED TAC NUKES, FOUNDATION WILL HAVE BEEN LAID FOR POSSIBLE CHANGE IN THEIR STRATEGY, TOWARD THAT OF US/NATO.

B. STRATEGY - FRANCE IS ITSELF GROPPING FOR A DOCTRINE TO GOVERN USE OF ITS GROWING INVENTORY OF TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS. AS IS OFTEN THE CASE, FRENCH TECHNOLOGY HAS OUTPACED ITS STRATEGY. THE MOST RECENT ADDITION TO FRENCH NUCLEAR INVENTORY, PLUTON, A 100 KM RANGE MISSILE WITH WARHEAD YIELD REPORTEDLY OF 10-15 KT, IS EXPECTED TO ENTER UNIT SERVICE IN FIRST HALF OF 1974. AIR DELIVERED TAC NUKES USING SAME WARHEAD AS PLUTON HAVE BEEN OPERATIONAL SINCE LATE 1974. EXPOSURE TO U.S. THINKING ON TAC NUKE R&D MIGHT HELP FRENCH RESOLVE IN THEIR OWN MIND CURRENT QUESTIONS OF EMPLOYMENT ALONG LINES MORE CONSISTENT WITH U.S. THINKING AS REFLECTED IN U.S. BRIEFING. MOREOVER, BY DEMONSTRATING HOW WE HAVE RESOLVED TECHNICAL PROBLEMS THAT FRENCH ARE BOUND TO ENCOUNTER EVENTUALLY, WE WOULD GAIN  
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OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE DIRECTION OF FRENCH PLANNING ON COMPOSITION OF FUTURE GENERATIONS OF FRENCH TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS. THIS DEVELOPMENT, IN AND OF ITSELF, COULD HAVE PROFOUND IMPACT ON FRENCH STRATEGY, MAKING IT MORE COMPATIBLE WITH US/NATO CONCEPT OF EMPLOYMENT OF TAC NUKES. IN THAT EVENT WE COULD PAVE WAY FOR SMOOTHER REINTEGRATION OF FRENCH FORCES WITH NATO, SHOULD GOF DECIDE TO REJOIN NATO'S MILITARY OPERATION IN TIME FOR CRISIS OR WAR.

C. DIALOGUE - FINALLY, BY UNDERTAKING TO PROVIDE THIS SENSITIVE INFORMATION TO GOF WE COULD PROMOTE BROAD DIALOGUE THAT MIGHT SHED LIGHT ON THEIR OWN R&D AND STRATEGIC THINKING AS THEY APPLY TO TAC NUKES.

3. WE WOULD WANT TO INSURE THAT FRENCH (AND OUR NATO ALLIES) DO NOT CONCLUDE THAT FRENCH INDEPENDENCE ON DEFENSE MATTERS IS REWARDED BY U.S. FAVORITISM. A BRIEFING DRAWING ON PRESENTATION TO NPG COULD PROVIDE JUST THE SORT OF PACKAGING NEEDED TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM: FRENCH WOULD RECEIVE NO MORE THAN HAVE OTHER NATO ALLIES. FURTHERMORE, WE SUSPECT SOME NATO ALLIES WOULD BE GRATIFIED BY SUCH A U.S. INITIATIVE WHICH, INFORMALLY IF NOT FORMALLY, WOULD PROVIDE SUBSTANTIVE BRIDGE BETWEEN FRANCE AND NATO ON SUBJECT OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO NATO DETERRENCE AND DEFENSE, AND SPECIFICALLY TO NATO'S STRATEGY OF FORWARD DEFENSE.

4. IF WASHINGTON AGREES THAT WE SHOULD OFFER BRIEFING TO FRENCH (PRESUMABLY AFTER ITS PRESENTATION TO NPG MINISTERS), WE FORESEE TWO POSSIBLE METHODS OF PRESENTATION -- EACH BASED ON ASSUMPTIONS THAT BRIEFING COULD BE APPROPRIATELY SANITIZED (IF NECESSARY) FOR FRENCH LISTENERS, AND THAT FRENCH ATTENDANCE WOULD BE RIGOROUSLY RESTRICTED ALONG LINES THAT PERTAIN TO NPG MINISTERIALS:

A. SECRETARY SCHLESINGER HAS BEEN INVITED BY MINISTER OF THE ARMED FORCES GALLEY TO VISIT FRANCE. THIS WOULD BE RETURN OF GALLEY'S SEPTEMBER VISIT TO U.S. VISIT TO FRANCE BY SECRETARY SCHLESINGER IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING JUNE NPG MINISTERIAL IN NORWAY WOULD PROVIDE PARTICULARLY GOOD SETTING AND TIMING FOR PRESENTATION OF BRIEFING.

B. USG COULD SEND SPECIAL BRIEFING TEAM FROM WASHINGTON TO MAKE PRESENTATION TO FRENCH.

5. OF THESE OPTIONS, WE PREFER FIRST BECAUSE OF ADDED SUBSTANCE  
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TIVE CONTENT THAT BRIEFING WOULD IMPART TO SECDEF-GALLEY MEETING AND BECAUSE WE COULD BETTER INSURE THAT PROPER LEVELS OF GOF (E.G., GALLEY, MAURIN) WERE ENGAGED.

6. THEREFORE, WE RECOMMEND BRIEFING BE OFFERED TO FRENCH, PREFERABLY AS PART OF SECDEF VISIT TO FRANCE.

7. DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO USNMR SHAPE.

GDS  
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